1: Gillin E-5 (1932-33)1936 SR9 Carib SR9

291 511 Above the falls at Towakaima, however, there are no shops, and at the time of my first visit, in December, 1932, only one or two prospectors. So the Indians of the upper Barama had no trade cloth for the making of sophisticated garments; women had no dresses, nor did the men have trousers. It is, therefore, the dress of these Indians which I shall describe, and it must be remembered that the description holds good for many individuals throughout the entire area, individuals who have not the means to procure the rudiments of European dress. Throughout the whole region the men usually use only a loin cloth for daily wear, even in cases where trousers or shirts are owned for "dressing up." The women, [797] on the other hand, having been instructed in Christian modesty by the good officers of the now defunct mission stations at St. Bede's and Kokerite, wear the European type of clothing more generally than the men. The dress, however, seems to be more an article of pride than a guardian of modesty. After becoming used to my presence the ladies did not hesitate to lay aside their dresses when doing heavy work which might tear or soil the garments. (See Plates 9, *b*-11, *a*, for different types of men's and women's clothing.)

The man's lap or loin cloth is called wokuru kamisharu. It is [828] almost always made of red cloth. Red appeals to the men's color sense, but also the Indians believe on the basis of experience that the red dye fades less quickly than other types. The strip of cloth is about eight inches wide and varies in length according to the size of the owner. A total length of forty inches is sufficient to allow pendant ends front and rear of a proper length on 291 a medium-sized man. Each end is decorated with a fringe of home- 531 spun cotton yarn called epururu (end thing) or sesururu (fuzzy thing). If beads are available a band of bead work may be worked into the fringe at its base. At each end of the cloth proper is usually a stripe of appliqué made of small bits of differently colored cloths sewn together and upon each other to form a pattern. These patterns (called piepaitu or piekono) have no extraneous significance at the present time. Usually the fringe on the end of the loin cloth which hangs down in back is carried up along each side of the cloth about two inches, thus distinguishing the front and the rear ends for the wearer.

291 The loin cloth is drawn between the legs and supported front

1 [i.e., trading shops run by foreigners – Analyst]

1: Gillin E-5 (1932-33) 1936 S82 Carib S89

number and the largest variety of items. Also, Miller or the members of his household own some of the most valuable imported items obtained in trade. This condition does to a certain extent reflect Miller's social prominence in the settlement; it may be regarded as a result of his social position, but not as a cause. Those outsiders who have dealings with the settlement (such as traders at Towakaima, the prospector Bell, myself) deal with Miller as the recognized head of the settlement, as the man with greatest influence; and he is therefore enabled to acquire more trade goods than other men. For instance, I required a crew of four men to go down river to Aranka, where I had left my supplies, and return to Sawari carrying a portion of the supplies on their backs. The round-trip journey was a matter of perhaps one hundred miles or about ten days. It was an arduous job, but one for which each of the men would be well paid. Negotiations were started with several men individually, but their enthusiasm was only mildly aroused, even by the prospect of acquiring fine trade goods for themselves and their families. Finally the matter was broached to Miller, who promptly persuaded four young men to undertake the journey as a favor to themselves, to him, and to me. A deal was made between Miller and the men whereby Miller obtained a certain part of the trade goods which each man received as pay, in return for his services in arranging the employment for them. Thus Miller, without making the trip himself, received more goods than any one of the men. But there is no formalization in an arrangement of this kind, which was made, in this case, simply as a personal agreement between Miller and the other men. His social prestige lent a persuasiveness to his words, but, although the consummation of a successful deal of this kind doubtless added something in turn to Miller's personal prestige, there is nothing in his office of headman which enables him to coerce the other members of the settlement. This was illustrated later, when the negro prospector, Bell, requested several laborers of Miller. Although Miller again tried to persuade members of the settlement to take the work, he was in this instance unsuccessful because the men involved considered Bell's trade goods too poor to make the job worth their while.

A mere survey of material possessions among the Caribs indicates a small degree of social importance because in this culture

1: Gillin E-5 (1932-33)1933 SR9 Carib SR9

556 422 511 the accumulation of wealth has little correlation with social status. There are certain material essentials, which have been described in our chapters on material culture, and these every household must possess if it is to survive. The list of these essentials is not large, as compared with the possessions of more complex cultures; but it must be remembered that the major part of the Carib possessions are really essentials, there are few luxuries in the catalogue of Carib material culture. Thus, the accumulation of essential goods is merely a matter of convenience, the goods have little social connotation in themselves. A man may have two bows, so that he will not be inconvenienced should one break, but he would consider it a foolish waste of time to make a dozen bows. He would have no use for them, and he would add nothing to his prestige (in fact, would damage his reputation for intelligence) in the eyes of his fellows by possessing such a surplus.

556 461 One of the reasons for the surprizingly considerate treatment which Indians receive from outsiders in this region is the fact that the latter have been forced to recognize that beyond a certain point, the mere possession of property means nothing to the Caribs. Every gold digger, lumber operator, and balata bleeder who has traveled on the Barama will tell you of the difficulty he has in keeping his Indian boatmen and laborers at work. "An Indian will work only until he gets what he wants and then he will quit cold," is a common observation. Consequently, anyone who relies on a native crew must depend upon the personal relations which he establishes with his workmen to a larger extent than the trade goods which he can give them.

251 Accumulations of food are likewise of little significance to the Caribs, for two reasons: the climate does not permit prolonged preservation of native food products, and daily supplies of food are readily available to the competent hunter and agriculturist, though not without a certain amount of effort, it is true. Cassava bread is the only food product which can be kept over a period of months, and such preservation is resorted to only in cases of necessity, inasmuch as the flavor of the product is adversely affected by storage.

301 511 A small number of luxuries are held in esteem by the Caribs. Among those which they produce themselves are necklaces of teeth and seeds, cotton fillets, bracelets, and other ornaments.

1: Gillin E-5 (1932-33) 1936 SR9 Carib SR9

There is, however, a limit of personal ornamentation beyond which an individual's movements in dancing and drinking activities are hindered at the expense of sociability. I have never seen a Carib "loaded down" with ornaments, although it would be comparatively simple to accumulate enough teeth, seeds, beads, in a lifetime to cover the body completely from head to foot. Cotton dresses are greatly prized by the women, but two or three such garments are considered quite sufficient. I have known many women who have urged their husbands to work enough to buy cloth for one or two dresses, but who have lost interest after sufficient cloth had been acquired. Men also desire singlets, trousers, and felt hats, but a Carib who has one of each of these in good condition cannot readily be interested in the acquisition of additional outfits.

Tobacco of European manufacture is perhaps the greatest luxury in the region, but I have never observed a tendency to hoard it on the part of those lucky enough to obtain some of this product. Thinking to stem the ceaseless requests for tobacco, I tried the experiment of presenting certain individuals with whole cans of Capstan, only to find that they had wasted it or given it away and were soon begging for more.

The only circumstance in which property factors enter directly into the social situation is that in which a man by reason of laziness becomes a continual borrower from his neighbors. (See section on Crime and Punishment.) If such a man does not reform, he will be eliminated from the social life of the settlement and eventually be forced to take up his residence elsewhere.

Economic activity among the Caribs, then, is based on need. Each family is responsible for itself, and although co-operation in labor and lending of goods is common, the principle of individuality in property remains intact. Accumulation of wealth is of little social importance because one does not need accumulated wealth to fortify or improve one's social position. The reasons for the absence of such need are to be found in the interaction of the culture and the environment.

Let us now turn to the economic activities of the inhabitants of Sawari. In the first place, two different arrangements are in force in regard to agricultural plots. These two types of arrangement are illustrated respectively by the partnership and individual fields.

This may occur with a young mother with an insecure relationship with the father or a child that is not her husband's. Also, a poor subsistence situation may inspire a woman to neglect or kill her infant. From the confidences expressed, there have occurred about five cases of infanticide over the last ten years. Aside from these measures, some women have expressed desires to limit the number of children they produce but profess a lack of knowledge on how to do so. With every fertile woman approaching the fulfillment of a potential to reproduce twelve to thirteen children, the implications for accelerating population growth are apparent. Also, with medical attention and other government assistance, the number of children who survive has increased.

Over the last forty years, the reproductive pattern of the Upper Barama River Carib population seems to have responded to changes in economic conditions. There is no evidence to demonstrate that this population was ever in any long period of equilibrium with regard to its size, or well regulated by cultural practices to maintain it below any direct relationship to fluctuations in local food resources. On the contrary, it appears that this population previously underwent conditions of famine from time to time. King (1968:16) reports a drought for Guyana every thirteen to fourteen years. Although there are no direct records kept for the Upper Barama River area, there are indications of periodic local food shortages. In the six years previous to the establishment of development programs at Baramita Air Strip, the Government was called upon twice to send relief food packages to the Caribs not directly involved in mining. However, by this time, the total population was influenced by the mining

175 economy. The most suggestive insight into a longer familiarity with
731 conditions of famine comes from popular stories. Cannibalism and
[266] other drastic measures in times of subsistence crises are a pronounced
[261] and recurrent theme.

168 It would appear that the behavioral measures designed to limit population have been practiced mainly during times of subsistence stress. Decisions regarding population control were probably made by
168 the mother alone relative to her own circumstances.[17] The net result
163 was a relatively limited rate of reproduction for the total population. These solutions were abandoned as subsistence stresses were alleviated
*177 by the availability of external resources. Since the introduction of
163 employment and other market opportunities and government subventions
• 511 after 1940, the Upper Barama River Carib population has not been subject to fluctuations in local resources. Even those segments of the population not directly employed have been affected. The point to emphasize is that external resources need not have been constantly available to the total population to affect the reproductive pattern of the total population. Only some access to external resources conveyed through regional networks of exchange needed to be available during times of subsistence crisis.

*177 439 Throughout the time period under consideration, commercial trade goods have been incorporated, mostly by way of substitution for their [412] local equivalent. Axeheads, cutlasses, knives, iron griddle pans, [415] cotton cloth, and shotguns reached the population in varying degrees [175] at the time of Gillin's study (1934:332). These trade goods did not lose their popularity. They have been added to by other external resources and their quantity and availability have been increased. [163] Eventually, a flow of external goods and services into the Upper [161] Barama River area has resulted in an increased birth rate and an [511] increasing population size, an improved standard of living, and [621] changes in the social organization of the population.

*177 175 443 [484] However, markets have been introduced and controlled by external agents. As has already been explained, the Upper Barama River Caribs do not have easy access to regional markets. They do not travel to transact regional exchanges. Rather, they have depended on the opportunities provided by non-Carib middlemen who reside in the Upper Barama River area and who have good access to the limited transportation and communication facilities. As characteristic of the conveyance of regional exchanges into remote areas, market opportunities have been highly personalized. This was characteristic of the early period of porknocking activities and the existence of the gold [657] companies. Personalized market networks continue to be associated with government programs and services at Baramita Air Strip.

*177 195 437 439 Market Opportunities Provided by the Early Gold Seekers

The earliest regional exchanges reported for these Caribs involved

the porknocker would bring on his next trip from Georgetown. However, relations with porknockers remained as transient as the porknocking operations themselves.

In short, these early opportunities were of a windfall nature. Neither porknocker nor Carib was economically bound to the other. Thus, these were associational relationships. With the establishment of trust, both the porknocker and Carib cooperated for mutual benefit. If a porknocker abused an Amerindian, he and often others would no longer work for this person. The reputations of Amerindians were also important. These early, individualized exchanges served to bring in trade goods which were incorporated into the existing subsistence pattern of the population. However, it was not until the presence of the mining companies that market opportunities were localized and of a sufficiently permanent nature to affect the local Carib subsistence routine.

Markets Introduced by the Gold Companies

Population data suggest that there are significant changes in the nature of reproduction among the Carib population in the time periods before and after 1940, when mining companies were first established in the Upper Barama River area. A more precise investigation of the relationship of the local population to new market opportunities introduced by the gold mining companies is in order. It is not assumed that there is a definable equation between the quantity of trade goods reaching this population and an increased rate of birth. The process of adaptation to these new markets does not appear to be

*177 175 163 511 that simple. Rather, guns and iron tools substituted for tools fashioned from bush materials tended to increase the efficiency of the exploitation of the rain forest. In addition, the more permanent availability of clothing, medical care, and food supplies tended to override any cyclical changes in local subsistence resources which would affect population size. Moreover, at no time were detailed records kept of the quantity of trade goods which reached this population as a consequence of the activities of gold mining companies, and at the onset of field work, these patterns of exchange no longer existed. Nevertheless, these regional networks of exchange and the involvement of the Carib population can be reconstructed.

*177 175 464 All the mining companies introduced some exchange opportunities. Only Baird's company, which persisted for over thirty years, significantly involved the local population. Only Carib men were employed as the work included carrying loads, hunting, cutting fields, and mining activities. Also, a majority of the adult men in the Carib population was never employed at one time. Yet, the employment opportunities resulted in channels for the dispersion of exchanges to a wider section of the population.

During the initial establishment of the companies, the Caribs did not comprise a reliable labor force. Laborers were brought in from Georgetown. While the Axel Johnson Company was still in operation, Baird and his partner had some problem with the desertion of coastal laborers. As a big company, Axel Johnson paid higher wages. Of course, the competition ceased when the Axel Johnson Company was closed. There occurred other problems in relation to the number of

candidates who were unemployed at the time, one man was selected by the largest number of votes to serve as Captain for a four-year term. Other candidates for the Captaincy became Councillors. Of these offices, only the Captaincy is a salaried position. It receives $150 a month.[4] The duties of these offices, which have been more clearly defined with the government settlement project at Baramita Air Strip, have provided a basis for the redistribution of the Captain's salary to a wider section of the population. However, the office of Captain among the Upper Barama River Caribs does not differentiate the officeholder in any sustained fashion from the rest of the population. Similar to other forms of local employment in the Upper Barama River area, the Captaincy is not a vehicle to gain a control in regional markets or to accumulate deployable forms of capital.

Previous to the establishment of the mining companies, the dispersed Carib settlements tended to be closed with regard to obtaining and sharing local subsistence resources. This pattern was apparently little disturbed by the first trade goods brought by the mobile porknockers. However, the money economy and the centralized channels of regional exchange introduced by the mining companies markedly altered Carib subsistence. External resources came to be critical to the subsistence patterns of the expanding local population, and settlements became more centralized around their source. In 1969, Baird's mining activities were directly supporting 171 individuals or 33.9 percent of the total Carib population at the time. Located nearby at Baramita, Aranka, and the Air Strip, another 190 individuals

*177 175 361 438 [484] or 37.7 percent of the total population frequently sold provisions at the trade store. This segment of the population also participated in the ancillary regional exchange networks provided by the missionaries and the Amerindian Captain. The remaining 28.4 percent of the population, the 143 individuals in the more remote settlements, made more infrequent trips to the trade store at In Time. Either through informal trade among Caribs themselves or the centralized channels created by the trade store, mining activities involved the entire local population in a common network of regional exchanges. In turn, this network was changed by the abandonment of In Time.

Regional Exchanges Centralized at Baramita Air Strip

*177 175 464 511 The cessation of mining activities late in 1969 again altered the subsistence patterns of the local Carib population. That segment of the population dependent on employment at the mine and maintaining no farms was faced with a subsistence crisis. The opportunities for the remainder of the population to sell provisions was greatly reduced.

*177 175 464 657 During the spring and summer of 1970, the Government began introducing programs and services to sustain this population. The new governmental offices have already been detailed (see Figure 3). The resources conveyed to the population through these new channels remain to be discussed. As data are available only for the first year of these new programs at Baramita Air Strip, this must remain a preliminary report.

*177 182 [463] The first year at the Air Strip was one of general parsimony. Job specialization among the Caribs was almost eliminated and everyone returned to rain forest subsistence.

indication that the natural environment has been permanently degraded in any manner. However, some Caribs have neglected bush farms; specifically, those who regularly worked as miners at In Time. With the rupture of their source of provisions, the former miners and their families were faced with a subsistence crisis when In Time was closed. As an emergency measure, government subventions were introduced to sustain these people while they re-established bush farms. This was not a simple matter of waiting for the first crop. Although the manioc cultivated by the Upper Barama River Caribs is usually mature in nine months, it was commonly harvested as early as four months by the residents of Baramita Air Strip during 1970-71. Immature manioc obviously yields less calories than the mature crop, and a deficit in future crops was established. Also, a closer scouring of the natural environment for all sources of food, however minute, and, inevitably, hunger ensued among the Carib population at Baramita Air Strip.

In their remote rain forest environment, there have been no opportunities among the local Carib population to acquire resource banks which might include livestock, real estate, local enterprises such as shops or other mechanisms to divert, store, or otherwise manipulate the resources conducted through regional networks. Even agricultural fields, a primary local resource, are dependent on the labor extended to develop them and are eventually reclaimed by the forest. This underscores the lack of any other basis to hedge against the insecurity of external resources except to continually spend the labor to maintain farms in the bush. In the same manner, there is